

23 cruisers, 104 destroyers, and 71 large landing craft of various descriptions, as well as troop transports, mine sweepers, and merchantmen. Combined, these forces constituted nearly 5,000 ships of every type, the largest armada ever assembled. Allied Air Forces flew 11,000 sorties to provide air cover, bomb beach-head fortifications, and most importantly, pin down the armored Panzer tank reserves that the Germans had available to counterattack and drive any Allied beachhead back into the sea.

Eisenhower had reasonable faith in his war plan, to be sure. He did not recklessly cast over 150,000 Allied soldiers into harm's way without taking every possible precaution to ensure success. But he was fully cognizant of just how badly things could go awry even if everything he could control went perfectly and on schedule. He was fully prepared to shoulder the entire blame himself if the outcome did not go well.

And there was much to be worried about. As the day of the invasion approached, the weather in the English Channel became stormy. The U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) reports that heavy winds, a five-foot swell at sea, and lowering skies caused General Eisenhower to postpone the assault from June 5 to June 6. Weather conditions remained poor, but when weather forecasters predicted the winds would abate and the cloud cover would rise enough on the scheduled day of the attack to permit aerial support, Eisenhower reluctantly gave the command.

Eisenhower also understood the awesome and heavy burden of leadership that comes with knowingly sending thousands of men to a place where many would not return home alive or uninjured. Planners had expected casualties of up to 80 percent among the airborne forces and glider troops. Eisenhower, knowing full well what was likely to face these airborne troops, traveled to an air base at Newbury, England to bid farewell to the members of the 101st Airborne Division before their tow planes and gliders carried them off to battle. The U.S. Army Center of Military History reports that a newspaper man who accompanied Eisenhower later told friends he had seen tears in the general's eyes.

Eisenhower's love and fear for his men was grounded in reality. Fewer than half of the gliders assigned to the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division ever reached their assigned landing zones on D-Day. Those that missed their targets either became stuck in hedgerows, struck German obstacles constructed specifically to counter glider troops, or were mired in swampy terrain. By midmorning of June 6, 1944, 4,000 men of the 82nd were unaccounted for, along with 60 percent of the equipment they had carried into battle.

Several of the beach landings went relatively smoothly and according to plan. But at the beach landing code-named OMAHA, many things seemed to go wrong all at once for the primarily American force. Naval and aerial bombardment of enemy mortar and artillery positions had failed to inflict substantial damage. As American infantry tried to take the beaches, they were pounded mercilessly by the German defenders. Allied rocket ships tried to bring additional indirect fire support, but they were launched at the outer limits of their effective range. When missiles fell short, they often hit Allied troops on the beach.

The high winds and strong currents blew many of the landing craft off course, making it

difficult to coordinate artillery support and leaving troops miles from their objective with useless maps. And where the Allied forces had appropriate maps, they didn't have the necessary radios with which to call in for fire support, reinforcements, or to coordinate their attacks. A lot of radios had gone to the bottom with their ships and landing craft. Many of those who landed were seasick or weary from the journey through choppy waters. Nearly half of the amphibious tanks accompanying the invaders sank, swamped by the high waves their design couldn't accommodate. Wreckage at the water's edge piled up and landing craft became hopelessly entangled in barbed wire and uncleared beach obstacles placed by the German defenders. Arriving at the battlefield during a rising tide, many landing craft became stuck on sandbars that were 50 to 100 yards from the waterline. Enemy machine guns, firing from heavily fortified bunkers, mowed down rank after rank of U.S. troops who had to wade to shore with fifty, eighty, or sometimes a hundred pounds of equipment through water that was often neck deep.

According to some estimates, barely one-third of the first wave of attackers ever reached dry land. Few heavy weapons made it to shore in the first wave at OMAHA making it extremely difficult to take out the mortars, machine gun emplacements, and artillery batteries that were raining death upon Allied forces. Some were killed the moment the landing doors dropped, as was so poignantly captured during the memorable film, "Saving Private Ryan." Those who were wounded and unable to move sometimes drowned as the tide moved in. Making matters worse, the force opposing them were seasoned German veterans from the 352nd Infantry Division.

Only sheer bravery and the monumental effort of human will posed against impossible odds carried the day at OMAHA beach. About 2,500 men were killed or wounded at OMAHA alone.

By the end of the day, the total tally of dead and injured topped 9,000. The American share was about 6,500. Among the American airborne divisions, about 2,500 became casualties. Canadian forces experienced about 1,100 casualties and another 3,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded. Approximately one-third of the casualties were killed in action.

At roughly 10 p.m., June 6, 1944, Eastern Standard Time, President Franklin D. Roosevelt broadcast a radio address to the nation, and led a prayer for the many thousands of soldiers committed irrevocably to battle that day:

Last night when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our Allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.

And so, in this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer:

Almighty God: our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith.

They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. For the enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces. Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again; and we know

that by Thy grace, and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph.

They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest—until the victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men's souls will be shaken with the violence of war. . . .

Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom. . . .

With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogancies. Lead us to the saving of our country, and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace—a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil. Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.

Incredibly, the high casualties suffered were less than Allied planners had actually expected. There were many who feared that Hitler would order the use of chemical weapons to prevent the Allies from gaining a toehold on the European mainland. According to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Eisenhower's chief surgeon, Maj. Gen. Albert W. Kenner, and the Chief Surgeon of the U.S. Army's European Theater of Operations, Maj. Gen. Paul R. Hawley (who later served with distinction as the chief medical officer of the VA), had prepared their staffs to process at least 12,000 killed and wounded in the First U.S. Army Division alone.

Despite the losses, and the unspeakable hardships endured by so many, the invasion succeeded. More than 100,000 men and 10,000 vehicles had come ashore that day, the first of millions who would hammer the final nails into Nazi Germany's coffin.

The skilled German Commander of Army Group B, Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, was quoted before the battle as saying "If we do not succeed in our mission to close the seas to the Allies, or in the first 48 hours, to throw them back, their invasion will be successful. . . . In the absence of strategic reserves and due to the total inadequacy of our navy and of our air force we will have lost the war." Rommel's assessment was ultimately to be proven right. Less than one year later, Nazi Germany would be beset on both sides by victorious Allied armies and surrendered.

Mr. Speaker, our nation must never forget or take for granted the sacrifices that were made to liberate Europe and put an end to Nazi tyranny. We must never turn our backs on the veterans who scaled the cliffs of Normandy against overwhelming odds.

As long as I have the privilege of serving as Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I will make it my highest priority to ensure that those who risked everything for the sake of our freedom, are honored and served appropriately by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

HONORING CALIFORNIA STATE
SENATOR BYRON D. SHER

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the members representing Silicon Valley, including

Representatives FARR, HONDA, LANTOS, LOFGREN and STARK, I rise to honor California State Senator Byron Sher, one of the most highly respected legislators in California, who, after representing San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties in the California State Legislature for nearly a quarter century, will retire. Senator Sher will be honored on Friday, April 30, 2004 by the Santa Clara County Democratic Party for his career of extraordinary public service.

Byron Sher graduated from Washington University, St. Louis, and earned a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1952. He held academic teaching positions in law at Southern Methodist University, the University of Southern California, Harvard Law School, Stanford Law School, and was a Fulbright Research Scholar in New Zealand. His elective public service spans from serving on the Palo Alto City Council with two terms as Mayor, to service on the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the Committee on Environmental Quality for the National League of Cities, and the League of California Cities.

In November, 1980, Byron Sher was elected to the California State Assembly where he served with distinction as the acknowledged leader of environmental policy for over fifteen years. In 1996, he was elected to the California State Senate in a special election to represent the 11th Senate District which currently spans three counties and stretches from San Carlos in the north to the City of Santa Cruz in the South, and which borders on both San Francisco and Monterey Bays.

During his tenure in the California State Legislature, Byron Sher expanded his reputation as the foremost expert on environmental issues. He is the first Chairman of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee, as well as the author of landmark laws to protect our environment and serve as legislative models for the rest of the nation. Among the laws he has authored are the California Clean Air Act, the Integrated Waste Management Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act. He has strengthened the State's timber regulations with his Surface Mining and Reclamation Act and he has been at the forefront of computer recycling programs to ensure that the dangerous byproducts of the information age, such as mercury, don't contaminate our landfills and water supplies. Senator Sher also authored the Nation's first law to prevent toxic contamination of water supplies from leaking underground storage tanks. Virtually all his legislation is considered the gold standard for environmental conservation and protection laws in our country.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud to call Byron Sher our friend and our colleague in public service. This quiet, humble, decent and brilliant man is a source of great pride to the Democratic Party, to our mutual constituents, to all Californians and to our entire Nation. We ask our colleagues to join us in honoring and thanking Senator Sher for his lifetime of extraordinary service to California and our country. Because of him and his distinguished service, we are unmistakably a stronger and a better Nation.

ON THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE U.S. NAVY'S DEPARTURE FROM VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

HON. ANÍBAL ACEVEDO-VILÁ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, 1 rise today to commemorate the one-year anniversary, this Saturday, May 1st, 2004, of the U.S. Navy's departure from the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Puerto Ricans have played a pivotal role in the national defense of the United States. The people of Vieques, Puerto Rico, in particular, bore over 60 years of bombing with everything from napalm to depleted uranium. In the 1940's, about two-thirds of their land was occupied by the U.S. Navy to make way for a bombing range on the eastern part of the island and a weapons depot on the western part of the island.

The movement to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques was in existence for many years. But the tragic death of Viequense David Sanes Rodríguez on April 19, 1999 as a result of two stray bombs dropped on the Observation Post in Vieques, contributed to galvanize the movement beyond partisan affiliations and political ideologies. That struggle reached its fruition with the U.S. Navy's departure from Vieques on May 1, 2003. It is important to note that the Navy has recently indicated that the replacement training scenario for the Atlantic Fleet is as good if not better than the training conducted on Vieques. This realization is well received by those who called for the cessation of training on Vieques.

The victory in Vieques is a victory first and foremost of the Viequenses. Yet it is also a victory of Puerto Ricans in the Island, in the U.S., and of many non-Puerto Rican elected officials, civic, community, labor and religious leaders and activists who participated in the struggle, organized marches, rallies, and lobbying initiatives. Many were arrested for peaceful civil disobedience in support for peace in Vieques.

I am proud to say that many of my fellow Members of Congress participated in this important initiative for peace in Vieques. For instance, on March 8, 2001, 110 Members of Congress signed a letter to President Bush calling for the immediate and permanent cessation of military practices in Vieques.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to place the March 8, 2001, letter from these 110 Members of Congress to President Bush into the RECORD at this time. On behalf of the people of Puerto Rico, I thank these Members of Congress for their support for peace in Vieques, and I urge them and my other colleagues to join me in working towards finishing the inconclusive agenda for the people of Vieques. The immediate task at hand is ensuring the adequate, full and prompt clean up and decontamination of the lands and surrounding waters of Vieques.

Although the Navy has left Vieques, much remains to be done before the residents of Vieques have the peace and justice they deserve. When the Navy left Vieques and transferred the lands on the eastern part of Vieques to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a year ago, the people of Vieques finally were free of the bombings that so disrupted and af-

fected their peace, health, well-being and livelihood. That achievement is a testament to the resilience and perseverance of the Viequenses and their allies. That resilience and perseverance is now needed to make sure that the lands are fully and promptly cleaned up and decontaminated. The legacy of contamination and health crisis in Vieques must end.

The Governor of Puerto Rico, Hon. Sila Calderón, has requested that Vieques—and the island of Culebra—be included in the National Priorities List under the Superfund law. That request is currently under consideration by the Office of Management and Budget. Once the relevant areas are designated for clean up and decontamination, the necessary funds must be appropriated to make sure that the clean up and decontamination is conducted fully and promptly. Unnecessary delays in the clean up process and insufficient funding would only exacerbate the health crisis suffered by Viequenses.

Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate the one-year anniversary of the Navy's departure from the beautiful island of Vieques, we are proud of the victory achieved by the Viequenses and their allies in a peaceful struggle for peace and justice for the close to 10,000 residents of Vieques. At the same time, we are mindful that the agenda for complete peace and justice in Vieques is still inconclusive. We will continue to work towards completing this agenda. I am counting on my colleagues' support in doing so.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, March 8, 2001.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,

President of the United States of America, The White House, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: For the last 60 years the U.S. Navy has been conducting military operations in two-thirds of the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. From the beginning, such operations have caused concern because of their consequences on the people, the environment, and the economy. The tragic death on April 19, 1999 of David Sanes-Rodríguez, a Vieques resident, during a training exercise, brought to the forefront of the Puerto Rican national and international communities the health, environment, and the violation of human and civil rights of the residents of that Island.

The People of Vieques have a mortality rate 40 percent higher than that of Puerto Rico, a 27 percent higher risk of dying from cancer, and a 70 percent higher risk of dying from diabetes. At the same time, Vieques' natural resources and environment have been seriously damaged by the continuous bombing and shelling, which have left heavy toxic metals in the environment. The island's economy has also been affected because Vieques has not been able to develop to its full potential as a direct result of the U.S. Navy's presence. In sum, the situation of Vieques has become an issue of health, environmental protection, and human and civil rights. In spite of all of these concerns, the U.S. Navy is determined to continue using Vieques for bombing exercises.

This issue has transcended political party and ideological lines in Puerto Rico. Leaders from all sectors of society agree that the bombing and shelling must end. At the same time, in the United States, the Senate of the State of New Jersey, led by the Republicans, approved a resolution, by unanimity, requesting the immediate cessation of the bombings. Governor Donald DiFrancesco (R-NJ), and Governor George Pataki (R-NY) have also stated their support for this effort.